

Message Text

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42 S

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 PRS-01

L-03 H-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 AID-05 OMB-01

EA-07 TRSE-00 /071 W

----- 087207

R 231056Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2940

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY BANGUI

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 0744

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NG

SUBJ: PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE URGES MORE ACTIVE US AND WESTERN
ROLE IN AFRICA

SUMMARY: SAW PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE AT HIS REQUEST FOR
ONE HOUR MORNING FEBRUARY 20. PRESIDENT SPENT MOST
OF TIME DISCURSING ON WHAT HE CONSIDERED DANGEROUS
TRENDS IN AFRICA THREATENING PEACE AND SECURITY OF
CONTINENT AND NEED FOR MORE POSITIVE US POLICY. HE ATTRIBUTED
THIS UNFORTUNATE STATE OF AFFAIRS TO GROWING SOVIET INFLUENCE
WHICH US WAS NOT COUNTERING BECAUSE OF LOSS OF WILL AND ELECTION
YEAR PARALYSIS, WHILE CHINA WAS SITTING ON SIDELINES
WAITING. TO PREVENT SOVIET DOMINATION, HE URGED MORE
ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA BY US AND ITS WESTERN ALLIES.
END SUMMARY.

1. KOUNTCHE STARTED MEETING BY CHIDING ME FOR NOT
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COMING TO SEE HIM MORE OFTEN; HE ALWAYS HAD TO

CONVOKE ME (WHICH HAS BEEN CASE FOR
OUR LAST TWO MEETINGS). I SAID I WOULD BE BACK
SOON.

2. HE SAID HE ASKED TO SEE ME BECAUSE HE WANTED TO
TALK ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY AND DEVELOPMENTS IN
AFRICA WHICH HE FOUND DISTURBING. CONTINENT WAS
BESET BY PROBLEMS SUCH AS ANGOLA, SPANISH
SAHARA, DJIBOUTI AND COMORES ISLANDS ISSUES. LEFT
ALONE, AFRICAN COUNTRIES MIGHT FIND SOLUTIONS, BUT
AFRICA WAS NOT OPERATING IN ISOLATION FROM REST OF
WORLD. SOVIETS WERE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN ESTABLISHING
THEMSELVES AND EXPANDING THEIR INFLUENCE. THEY
HAD A BASE IN SOMALIA, ANOTHER WAS BEING CREATED
IN ANGOLA. DJIBOUTI AND SPANISH SAHARA
GAVE THEM ADDITIONAL ISSUES TO EXPLOIT AND WHILE
SOVIETS DID NOT AS YET APPEAR TO BE ENGAGED IN
SPANISH SAHARA, THEIR HAND WOULD APPEAR SOON.
THERE WERE UNFORTUNATELY AFRICAN STATES THAT FOR
REASONS OF EXPEDIENCY WOULD RESPOND TO SOVIET OVERTURES.
IF ONE IS POOR OR WEAK ENOUGH, ONE WILL MAKE A DEAL WITH
THE DEVIL AS MPLA HAD DONE WITH SOVIETS AND
BOKASSA WITH SOUTH AFRICA.

3. IN THIS CONTEXT SOVIETS HAD AMPLE OPPORTUNITIES
TO PURSUE AND INTENSIFY THEIR CURRENT
ACTIVIST POLICIES IN AFRICA AND AFRICAN STATES WITHOUT
OUTSIDE BALANCING FORCE CANNOT EFFECTIVELY COPE
WITH SOVIET PRESSURES AND ENTICEMENTS. DOUNTCHE
QUICKLY ADDED HE DID NOT FEAR AFRICAN STATES WOULD
BECOME COMMUNIST. CERTAINLY NIGER WOULD NOT NOR WOULD
COUNTRY LIKE NIGERIA. EVEN GUINEA WHILE SPOUTING
ANTI-IMPERIALIST MARXIST JARGON KEPT ITS LINES
OPEN TO U.S..

4. I INJECTED QUESTION ABOUT BENIN. HE
ADMITTED SITUATION IN BENIN WAS WORRISOME. KEREDOU WAS
NOT VERY BRIGHT AND WAS UNDER INFLUENCE OF RADICAL
CLIQUE BENT ON CREATING SO-CALLED SOCIALIST STATE.
EVERYTHING WAS BEING NATIONALIZED EVEN DOWN TO LEVEL OF
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PETTY TRADERS WHO TRADITIONALLY SOLD THEIR GOODS
ACROSS BORDER. NIGER NOW BEING DENIED ACCESS TO THIS
BADLY NEEDED FOOD SUPPLY TO DETRIMENT OF CITIZENS BOTH
SIDES OF BORDER. BENIN'S POLICIES HAD ALSO
LED TO SERIOUS AND UNFORTUNATE DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS
WITH US (ABOUT WHICH HE SEEMED WELL-INFORMED).
DOUNTCHE SAID HE HAD WARNED KEREKOU OF FOLLY OF HIS
POLICIES AT THEIR RECENT MEETING IN PARAKOU BUT HE

DID NOT THINK HE HAD MADE MUCH IMPRESSION.

5. REVERTING TO HIS MAIN THEME, KOUNTCHE WENT ON TO SAY THAT WITH CHINA SITTING THIS ROUND OUT, ONLY US COULD PROVIDE STRATEGIC BALANCE TO SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA AND HE APPEALED TO US TO UNDERTAKE MORE ACTIVE POLICY TOWARDS AFRICA AND GREATER INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICAN AFFAIRS. HE REALIZED THIS WAS DIFFICULT IN ELECTION YEAR WHICH SEEMED TO PARALYZE US FOREIGN POLICY. FURTHER, WITH AIRING OF LOCKHEED AND OTHER MISDEEDS, US SEEMED BENT ON UNDERMINING ITS ALLIES. HOWEVER, APPEAL STILL HAD TO BE MADE BECAUSE IF US AND ITS ALLIES DID NOT ACT THEY WOULD FIND SOVIETS FAR MORE ENTRENCHED BY TIME NEW ADMINISTRATION ARRIVED ON SCENE IN 1977.

6. I AGREED THAT DOMESTIC CONCERNS AND CONGRESSIONAL ACTS WERE PUTTING CONSTRAINTS ON US POLICY TOWARDS AFRICA, BUT I DID NOT THINK HE SHOULD WRITE US OFF. IN FACT, IN SAHEL, FOR EXAMPLE, US WAS ENGAGED IN UNUSUAL HUMANITARIAN EFFORT WITH NO ULTERIOR MOTIVES TO ORGANIZE A LONG-RANGE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR SAHELIAN COUNTRIES INCLUDING NIGER. THIS PROGRAM WAS AS IMAGINATIVE AND EXCITING AS MARSHALL PLAN HAD BEEN IN POST-WAR EUROPE AND RESULTS COULD BE EQUALLY IMPRESSIVE. KOUNTCHE ACKNOWLEDGED THIS BUT CAME BACK TO THEME THAT ONLY THING THAT WOULD STOP SOVIETS IN AFRICA WAS US WILL AND POWER. I SUGGESTED AFRICANS THEMSELVES HAD ROLE TO PLAY. FOR EXAMPLE, ALTHOUGH NIGER HAD RECOGNIZED MPLA IT WAS STILL ON RECORD AS FAVORING REMOVAL OF ALL FOREIGN TROOPS. AT FORTHCOMING OAU MEETING, WHY DID NOT NIGER AND ITS FRIENDS LAUNCH APPEAL FOR DEPARTURE OF
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ALL FOREIGN TROOPS FROM ANGOLA NOW THAT MPLA SEEMS TO HAVE ACHIEVED ITS MILITARY VICTORY. KOUNTCHE AGAIN ACKNOWLEDGED THERE MIGHT BE SOME POINT TO THIS BUT ADDED SUCH APPEAL WAS ONLY COSMETIC AND WOULD NOT DETER SOVIETS FROM THEIR OBJECTIVES IN AFRICA. ANY MOVES BY AFRICAN STATES WOULD BE EFFECTIVE ONLY IF SOVIETS FACED DETERMINED US IN AFRICA. WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS A BIT OF COLD WAR IN AFRICA.

7. I RESPONDED BY SAYING WHAT PRESIDENT WAS ADVOCATING WAS A NO-WIN POLICY. IF US ACTED IT WOULD BE ACCUSED OF BRINGING COLD WAR TO AFRICA OR LINING UP WITH SOUTH AFRICANS AGAINST AFRICANS AND IF IT DID NOT ACT, OF LEAVING FIELD TO SOVIETS. KOUNTCHE READILY AGREED SAYING US WILL BE DAMNED WHATEVER

IT DOES BUT THAT IS PRICE SUPER POWER MUST PAY. HE
AGAIN URGED US AND WEST TO PLAY THEIR PART IN DEVELOPING
AFRICAN SITUATION.

8. IT WAS LEFT AT THAT. I SAID I WOULD REPORT HIS
VIEWS TO WASHINGTON.

9. KOUNTCHE'S COMMENTS ON ISSUES BEFORE
FEB 23-28 OAU MEETING IN SEPTTEL.

10. COMMENT: PERHAPS MORE THAN COINCIDENTALLY,
OUR LOCAL DAILY SAHEL OF FEB 21 WHICH REPORTED MY MEETING
WITH PRESIDENT, ALSO CARRIED ARTICLE ON PAGE DEVOTED
TO INTERNATIONAL NEWS ENTITLED "AMERICAN DIPLOMACY
PARALYZED BY ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN". ARTICLE WHICH HAS
NO DATE, PLACE OR ATTRIBUTION MAKES POINT THAT DECISION
OF US NOT TO INTERVENE IN WORLD'S TROUBLE SPOTS AND
ESPECIALLY IN AFRICA IS ONE OF MOST IMPORTANT
DEVELOPMENTS SINCE WW II. IN REVERTING TO ISOLATIONISM
AT LEAST UNTIL END OF ELECTIONS, US LEAVES FIELD
OPEN TO SOVIETS TO DOMINATE EUROPE AND AFRICA
UNLESS EUROPEANS AND AFRICANS RISE TO CHALLENGE AND
UNITE TO RESIST THIS HEGEMONY. ARTICLE ADDS,
HOWEVER, THAT AMERICANS CANNOT BE WRITTEN OFF
COMPLETELY---HISTORY SHOWS THAT THEY ARE
CAPABLE OF MOBILIZING RAPIDLY IF THEY FIND THEIR
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INTERESTS THREATENED.

11. NEXT TIME I SEE KOUNTCHE I WILL ASK HIM WHETHER
HE WAS WRITING MY CABLE FOR ME. END COMMENT.HECK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, BALANCE OF POWER
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NIAMEY00744
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760067-0206
From: NIAMEY
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760223/aaaaatzb.tel
Line Count: 205
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 APR 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <10 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE URGES MORE ACTIVE US AND WESTERN ROLE IN AFRICA
TAGS: PFOR, NG, XA, (KOUNTCHE, SEYNI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006